

Johannes Westbrook House  
Old Mine Road  
Minisink  
Sandyston Township, Sussex County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-435

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2-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

ADDENDUM  
FOLLOWS...

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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Johannes Westbrook House  
Old Mine Road  
Minisink  
Sandyston Township, Sussex County, New Jersey

Owner: Burson Bell

Date of Erection: About 1725

Architect:

Builder: Johannes Westbrook, Jr.

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: Two

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone

Exterior walls - stone

Interior walls - plaster

Inside chimneys

Roof - pitch

Historical Data:

The first Johannes Westbrook was born in Albany in 1687. He was one of the earlier settlers in the upper Minisink region voting there in 1701. He died in 1727. About 1724 one son, Anthony, purchased 120 acres on Minisink Island and 120 acres on the main land. Cornelius Low in 1725 surveyed and plotted three five-acre house-lots along the river bank; on one of these house-lots, Johannes Westbrook, Jr., is believed

to have built the present house. He was baptized in Kingston in 1698 and married in 1715. The house has remained in the possession of the family from the date of erection. The last Westbrook to have possession of the property was Clementina, who married Benton Bell; their son Burson is the present owner.

Near this house is the site of the Old Minisink Fort. During the French and Indian War in 1755-58, a series of forts were built along the Delaware - one here by the Westbrook house known as the Minisink Fort; one down at the Isaac Van Campen House, and one at the Abram Van Campen House. All of them have disappeared - the Minisink Fort remaining longer than the others having been torn down about three years ago.

Bibliography:

Bailey, R. F. Pre-Revolutionary Dutch Houses and Families in Northern New Jersey and Southern New York New York, William Morrow and Company, 1936

Information from the present owner

Walter E. Hart  
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams  
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.  
District Officer

QW 8/28/57

Westbrook-Bell House  
.1 mi. West of Old Mine Road  
Montague Vicinity  
Sandyston Township  
Sussex County  
New Jersey

HABS No. NJ-435

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An addendum to  
Westbrook House  
Old Mine Road  
Hopatcong Vicinity  
Sussex County  
New Jersey  
in HABS 1941 Catalog

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NJ-435

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WESTBROOK-BELL HOUSE

An addendum to  
Westbrook House  
Old Mine Road  
Hopatcong vicinity  
Sussex County  
New Jersey  
in HABS 1941 Catalog

Location: .1 mile west of Old Mine Road (State Route 521), 2.1 miles northwest of Hainesville, Montague vicinity, Sandyston Township, Sussex County, New Jersey.

USGS Milford Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator  
Coordinates: 18.514640.4569290.

Present Owner: United States Government

Present Use: vacant

Significance: This small stone house is one of three still standing which formed the village of Minisink. It was built in two different parts. The oldest, possibly predating 1730, contains what may be a secret Indian cellar. The house was extensively remodeled in the 1860s, and again in 1955, but still maintains the intimacy and charm it originally possessed.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: Circa 1720s. A house was mentioned in a 1730 deed transferring this property.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners:

Early title is clouded for the property. The one known deed prior to 1800 is the Indian Deed.

1730 Date: 6 Dec. 1730

Unrecorded: the original is in possession of Bell descendants

Tyacop, Indian of Minisink, owner and true possessor to  
Johannas Westbrook of Minisink, Hunterdon County, Province  
of N.J.

5 pounds for 720 acres including the land on which Johannas  
Westbrook's house and barn stand.

Recorded deeds in Sussex County Hall of Records, Newton, N.J.

- 1800 Date: 5 Sept. 1800 Rec. 18 Feb. 1801  
Deed Book Vol. E p. 1  
Martin Westbrook and Margaret (wife) to Abraham Westbrook  
(Martin's son)  
\$1250 for "...all the just undivided half part or share of  
all the lands that he owns...in Sandyston."
- 1848 Date: 14 Jan. 1848 Rec. 7 April 1848  
Deed Book Vol. H-4 p. 131  
Ann Westbrook to Hugh B. Westbrook, Mary Carmer, Eliza  
Westbrook  
\$1 for 159.69 acres. Ann retained the right to live in one  
room of the house, "...occupied by Martin Westbrook (the  
father-in-law of the said party of the first part) late of  
Sandyston."
- 1858 Date: 30 March 1858 Rec. 6 April 1858  
Deed Book V-4 p. 346  
Mary Carmer to Eliza Westbrook  
\$1590 for 1/3 part of 159 acres.
- 1886 Date: 12 Jan. 1886 Rec. 22 Jan. 1886  
Deed Book Vol. Y-7 p. 475  
Eliza Westbrook to Clementina W. Bell (wife of Benton Bell)  
\$2000 for 159 acres and 44.39 acres  
Eliza retained the right to live on the land.
- 1953 Date: 18 Nov. 1953 Rec. 18 Nov. 1953  
Deed Book Vol. 526 p. 393  
Burson W. Bell  
to Helen B. Velders & Albert H. (husband), Estella N.  
Wilson & Hugh (husband), Alice McGill & Clifford (husband),  
B. Welding Bell and Lida (wife), George R Bell and Evelyn  
(wife) 159 acres and 44.39 acres
- 1957 Date: 28 Feb. 1957 Rec. 28 Feb. 1957  
Deed Book Vol. 603 p69  
Helen B. Velders, et al  
to Colin H. Browning & Ellenor (wife)  
19 acres and 9.8 acres

4. Original plan and construction: The L-shaped house consists of two sections constructed in two different stages. Both sections are early, appearing to date from the eighteenth century, but judging from architectural evidence, the larger portion is the older of the two. The back wall of the main house is continuous while the stone kitchen wing is a three-sided structure joining the main building. The roof of the main house appears to have been completed and later cut into to provide a doorway to the attic over the kitchen wing. The roof over the kitchen does not seem to be altered as would be the case if it were an earlier roof extended to meet the main roof.

The cellar below the east portion of the stone house is reputed to have been built as a refuge from Indians. It is accessible only from a trap door in the room above. Openings in the northeast side apparently once provided access to a tunnel that led to a nearby ravine.

5. Alterations and additions: The main house was extensively modernized by Eliza Westbrook, according to family tradition. This would appear to have been in the 1860s. The large central chimney was removed and replaced by twin end chimneys and small end fireplaces. A central hall and stairs occupy the place where the central chimney stood. The interior trim all seems to date from this remodelling. Large barge boards were applied to the gable ends, with returning eaves on the southeast end. A wooden summer kitchen was added in the north corner.

A zinc shingle roof was applied ca. 1910-20. More recently the end chimneys have been removed along with the returning eaves and a small cement-block chimney for the furnace has been added to the southeast end. Some of the old small-pane windows were replaced with one-over-one-light sash.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

This house was probably built by Johannes Westbrook, who, according to Stickney, settled in the Minisink ca. 1700 on the basis of the Ulster County, N.Y., voting records which indicate that he resided and voted in Minisink in 1701. Exactly when he built the house is unclear, but the village of Minisink was surveyed in 1725, and the area appears to have been quite stable by 1730. The Indian deed, then, is probably an effort to legalize ownership well after the land was settled, perhaps as an attempt to foil claims of N.J. Proprietors. The other remaining eighteenth-century houses in Minisink Village area are the William Ennes House (HABS No. NJ-431) and the Everitt House (HABS No. NJ-823).

This house remained in the Westbrook-Bell family from its construction until 1957. The Bell name was introduced to the house when Clementina Westbrook married Benton Bell.

C. Sources of Information

Bailey, Rosalie Fellows. Pre-Revolutionary Dutch Houses and Families in Northern New Jersey and Southern New York. Dover, 1968, (Reprint of 1936 ed.).

Decker, Amelia Stickney. That Ancient Trail. 3rd Edition, Trenton, 1962, pp. 24 & 111.

Interview with Mrs. Alice McGill and Mrs. Estella N. Wilson, Hainesville, N.J. 9 July 1970.

Larrabee, Edward C. M. "New Jersey and the Fortified Frontier System of the 1750's." Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1970.

Stickney, Charles E. "The Old Mine Road," a series of articles published from 7 July 1911 to 19 Jan. 1912 in the Wantage Recorder, Sussex, N.J., No. 24, 22 Dec. 1911.

Prepared by: William C. Badger  
Wesley Shank  
Project Historians  
HABS  
July-August, 1970

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: This small stone house, dating from the early eighteenth century, maintains its form despite numerous interior alterations.

2. Condition of fabric: fair

B. Description of Exterior

1. Over-all dimensions: The one-and-a-half-story original stone portion measures 40'-1" x 23'-2". A smaller one-and-a-half-story addition, also dating from the eighteenth century, is located at the east corner and measures 18'-5" x 20'. A twentieth-century frame addition near the north corner measures 18'-5" x 12'-4".

2. Foundations: Rubble stone



3. Wall construction, finish, and color: The walls are gray rubble stone, coursed most carefully on the southeast wall and less so elsewhere. The gables of the original structure are white clapboards; the northeast gable is stone. The north addition is wood frame with novelty siding.
4. Structural system, framing: Stone bearing walls. In the original portion, the first-floor beams span clear. Their direction is parallel to the ridge of the roof. They bear on the stone walls; the ends are now rotted and propped on wooden posts. Cellar under smaller portion not seen.
5. Chimneys: In the cellar of the original portion, the stone base for a central chimney remains, although the chimney has been removed. A concrete-block chimney is centered on the exterior of the southeast gable wall. A brick chimney rises from the stone fireplace on the northwest wall of the east addition.
6. Openings
  - a. Doorways and doors: The door in the southeast elevation has two panels at the base with glazing above. The door on the southwest elevation has four panels and is partially below grade. The door in the frame addition has vertical planks with glazing.
  - b. Windows: On several occasions, the window openings are spanned by wooden lintels visible in the exterior walls; at other places, apparently the window frames span the openings. Most of the windows have one-over-one-light sash, with nine-over-six-light sash in the first floor of the northwest gable end and six-over-six-light sash at the second.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Intersecting gables. Wood shingles can be seen from attic of smaller portion; roofing is zinc shingles, painted red.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: In the original portion, eaves are enclosed, projecting slightly at gables.
- C. Description of Interior
  1. Floor plans
    - a. Basement: The basement has two separate rooms, not accessible from each other. The southwest room has two exterior stairways. The east room is accessible only by a trap door. There is a cistern northwest of the east room.

- b. First floor: The original portion has a central hall with a room behind the stairway. There are two rooms northwest of the stairway, and one room to the southeast. The latter leads into the kitchen in the east addition. Northwest of that is another room in the frame addition.
  - c. Second floor: The second floor has two rooms in the northwest end and one in the southeast, which adjoins the attic over the east addition.
- 2. Stairways: The main stairway in the center of the original portion has 9 1/2" risers with 9 3/4" treads, turned newel and balusters, and simple handrail.
  - 3. Flooring: Wide pine boards nailed down. Some replacement 6" pine floors.
  - 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plastered ceilings and walls. Upstairs on the divider between the two rooms in the larger portion, there is a horizontal beaded board with metal clothes hooks.
  - 5. Doorways and doors: Assorted four- and six-panel doors. Oldest appears to be a six-panel door with panels on one side flush and beaded at the side.
  - 6. Decorative features and trim: There are small, plain mantles around boarded up fireplaces in the center of the end walls of the larger portion, two downstairs and one in the south bedroom upstairs. The upstairs opening is at present a small cabinet.
  - 7. Hardware: The basement bulkhead door has the only wrought hardware: pintle strap hinges and a hook.
  - 8. Mechanical equipment: Iron crane in old kitchen fireplace in east addition. Concrete base and living room grate remain from a pipeless furnace.
- D. Site
- 1. General setting and orientation: The house faces southwest on flat land near Delaware River, adjoining a small ravine on the northeast side.
  - 2. Outbuildings: four barns and sheds, and a "tenant house" in ruins.

Prepared by: William C. Badger  
Wesley Shank  
Project Historians  
HABS

and July, 1970  
Robert C. Giebner  
Project Supervisor  
HABS  
July, 1967

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, supervised by the National Park Service and funded by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The project, which extended from 1967 to 1971, was under the general direction of James C. Massey, Chief of HABS. This structure was measured and drawn in the summer of 1967 under the direction of Robert C. Giebner (University of Arizona), Project Supervisor, by student assistant architects David L. Bouse (University of Nebraska), William L. McQueen (University of Illinois), and Dennis E. Walo (Texas A & M University) in the HABS field office at Columbia, New Jersey, in the project area of the Tocks Island Reservoir and the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area. The historical data was written by Wesley Shank and William C. Badger, project historians, in 1970. The written data was edited for transmittal to the Library of Congress in the summer of 1980 by Alison K. Hoagland of the HABS staff. The photographs were taken by George Eisenman in 1967.